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MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION

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SUMMARY:

This paper gives a full summary and update on the Review of School Organisation taking place in Norfolk.

The Code of Practice referred to in paragraph 8 will be circulated shortly.

ACTION REQUIRED: To note

DATE DOCUMENT OBSOLETE:

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS: MI Sheet 5/99

REVIEW OF SCHOOL ORGANISATION

Since November 1997 Norfolk LEA has been engaged in a formal Review of School Organisation, focusing on three main issues:

age of transfer;
small rural schools;
unfilled places.

Extensive County-wide consultation took place early in 1998 on these issues and there was widespread support for the Authority taking positive initiatives to secure a more coherent and robust pattern of organisation which would:

lead to greater stability and accountability;
guide long-term planning;
help win bids for capital funding from Government;
give parents and staff a clear indication of long-term objectives;
contribute positively to LEA and school improvement strategies.

2. The reports to the Education Committee on the Review have been sent to all Headteachers on each occasion. This paper provides a summary.
3. In September 1998, the Education Committee agreed policy on age of transfer, as follows:
 - The Committee recognises that a coherent and cohesive pattern of school organisation is vital to the quality of education in the County.
 - The LEA will plan towards common ages of transfer at 7+ and 11+ across the County with a recognition that where 5-11 schooling is a practical and affordable alternative to 5-7 and 7-11 this be preferable so as to avoid children changing school twice in the primary years.
 - Given the need to secure capital resources and to engage in extensive local consultation, a phased approach be adopted to achieving this goal. Each area within the County should be given an indication as soon as possible of when specific proposals for reorganisation would be capable of being brought forward and in the LEA's School Organisation Plan at the latest.
 - The Committee intends to address the situation in those areas with dual age transfer as the highest priority, although single age 12+ transfer areas which appear to offer cost effective schemes of reorganisation because of the incidence of unfilled places should also be seen as a high priority.
 - Particular attention will be given to minimising the adverse effects on staff displaced in any way by organisational change.

Some discussion and consultation has taken place in the Thorpe/Heartsease and Earlham/Costessey areas of Norwich but the Education Committee does not intend to consider these areas other than as part of a wider review of Norwich. The indicative timescale for review will be published in the School Organisation Plan.

Local discussions or formal consultation on age of transfer will be held in the following areas in Spring/Summer 1999:

Wymondham Area – Public Meetings are being held in March 1999 to discuss the future pattern of schooling. The Education Committee is consulting about proposals to change the age of transfer in Wymondham from the existing 12+ to 11+.

Loddon Area - Local discussion is planned to take place in the Summer term.

Long Stratton - Local discussions with Heads and Chairs of Governors began in February.

Swaffham – Local discussion with Heads and Chairs of Governors began in February.

Stalham areas - Local discussions with Heads and Chairs of Governors are taking place.

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There has also been consideration and some local consultation on collaborative models for small rural schools. A meeting of the Education Committee was held on 14 December 1998 and it was decided that, after consultation in the Litcham and Stalham areas, no action would be taken on formal collaboration and the following recommendations were agreed:

That the Education Committee authorise discussions with schools in the coming months on the preparation of models for the development of informal collaboration and joint activities between schools in the manner described in the report and that the ability to put forward successful bids to the new Small Schools Support Fund next year should be addressed as part of this work.

ii. That recommendation (i) above also apply to the Litcham and Stalham areas.

iii. In addition, that the future arrangements for small schools in the Stalham area be considered in the context of a review of the age of transfer for the area as a whole and that this should be addressed at an early stage with discussions being initiated early in the New Year concerning the possibility of a change in the age of transfer into Stalham High School from September, 2000.

8.

A Code of Practice for employment matters for teaching and non-teaching staff has been developed with recognised trade unions and other partners and was agreed by Committee in March 1999.